

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

(Section of the Library
Association)

Hon. Editor: Frank M. Gardner

Willesden Public Libraries



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EDITORIAL

The programme of meetings for 1933-4 is as follows:

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| October 11th, 7 p.m. | Inaugural Meeting, London School of Economics. <i>Speaker</i> : Mr. Stanley Unwin, on "The Publisher, the librarian, the bookseller, and the reader." <i>Chairman</i> : Sir Henry Miers, D.Sc., M.A., F.R.S. |
| November 8th,
7 p.m. (Joint). | Royal Academy. Details to be arranged. |
| December 13th,
7 p.m. | Chaucer House. Library and the Community, I. The Library and the Aristocrat. <i>Speaker</i> : J. Fry, F.L.A. (Barking). <i>Chairman</i> : Mr. G. P. Jones, B.A. |
| January 10th,
1934, 3 p.m. (Joint). | Chaucer House. Discussion on Professional Education: (a) The Student's Case. B. Oliph Smith (Middlesex County); (b) The School of Librarianship's Case. James Wellard, B.A. (Bermondsey); (c) General résumé. F. Seymour Smith, F.L.A. <i>Chairman</i> : Miss E. M. Exley, F.L.A. |
| February 14th,
7 p.m. | Chaucer House. Library and the Community, II. The Library and the Democrat. <i>Speaker</i> : W. E. Maskell, F.L.A. (Dagenham). <i>Chairman</i> : Mr. G. P. Jones, B.A. |
| March 14th,
7 p.m. (Joint). | Visit to London School of Economics new extensions, and Talk by B. M. Headicar, F.L.A. <i>Chairman</i> : Mr. J. E. Walker, F.L.A. |
| April 11th, 3 p.m. | Visit National Central Library. Talk by Col. Newcombe. |
| 5 p.m. | Tea. |
| 6.30 p.m. | Chaucer House. Library and the Community, III. The Library and the Proletariat. <i>Speaker</i> : D. E. Coult (Ilford). <i>Chairman</i> : Mr. G. P. Jones, B.A. |
| May 9th, 6 p.m. | Meeting place to be arranged. <i>Speaker</i> : Mr. W. Haugh (Liverpool). |
| June 13th. | Annual Meeting at Derby. |

(Joint) indicates joint meeting with the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association.

In addition to the above meetings, a series of "At Homes," in which the A.A.L. and the London and Home Counties Branch will co-operate, will

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be held at Chaucer House on certain Thursday evenings during the session. The first meeting, it is hoped, will be on 7th December, but details are yet to be arranged. Notice of these meetings will appear in the *Library Assistant* from time to time.

The above programme is one of the best that has ever been arranged, and it is expected that members will show their appreciation of the fact by attendance in large numbers. Provincial members are reminded that they will be very welcome at any meeting of the Session, and the "Thursday evenings," in particular, should provide opportunity for informal talk and exchange of felicitations. It had been hoped, as a star attraction this Session, to arrange a debate on the question of the unpaid assistant, but unfortunately the Council were unable to find for the unpaid assistant a public defendant.

Correspondence Courses.—Students are reminded that applications for the Alternative Courses in the Intermediate Section must reach Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, before 20th October. *The next courses in all sections will begin in April next, and full particulars will be given in the January ASSISTANT.*

We welcome a strange pen to our pages this month in Mlle. Colette Adam, whose report on the successful Summer School at Birmingham makes delightful reading. We hope (and we think our readers will also hope) that Mlle. Adam's first contribution to the *Library Assistant* will not be her last.

The Staff Association of the Sheffield Public Libraries is desirous of purchasing second-hand copies of the following textbooks for the use of students.

Brown, J. D., *Classification and cataloguing*, and *Subject classification*, Cutter's *Rules for a dictionary catalogue*, Dewey's *Decimal classification*, 11th ed., McColvin's *Theory of book selection*, and Sayer's *Canons of classification*. Offers should be made to Mr. J. Cranshaw, Central Library, Surrey Street, Sheffield, 1.

CO-OPERATION IN PRACTICE

By CHARLES SEXTON

FOR some time past there have been felt subterranean rumblings that all is not well with the regional schemes that are supposed to be working so successfully. People concerned with them have talked in hushed whispers and arrived at definite conclusions, and there is, too, a noticeable reluctance on the part

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of some areas to inaugurate schemes. But up to now the rumblings have remained subterranean. The lions wait for a Daniel.

Every librarian worthy of the name welcomed the advent of the Central Library for Students, as it was at first wrongly called. The idea had for many years been practised unofficially by certain big libraries. A mistake, afterwards rectified, was made in the name of this institution, and further confusion arose over garbled and fantastic statements in the Press and on the wireless as to "every student his book, any book, any time, anywhere," etc. Consequently readers thought that any book could be got in a few days, and students fondly and erroneously imagined that they need not buy any more textbooks. I well remember one young man handing me a list of nine expensive textbooks for the Chartered Accountants' Final Examination with a request that they be got by the following Monday, and an added note that he would like them for at least nine months. I tried to explain things to him, but he would have nothing to do with me. He had seen it in the papers, heard it on the wireless, and he went away firmly convinced that I knew little about library affairs.

He was one of the many who had to be disillusioned. Ultimately we had the more logical and sensible name *The National Central Library*, and the textbook and new book craze died down a little.

Then came the regional schemes. Here again every experienced librarian welcomed the plan, since the advantages of a central catalogue of all the books in a given area were obvious. To take one example of the many that have come my way: we have not in the reference library at Cardiff a set of the *Acta sanctorum*. At least three research students to my knowledge have had to go to the British Museum to see a copy, yet later the regional catalogue revealed a set in the college library a few hundred yards away from us.

At meetings called to inaugurate these regional schemes the usual fantastic statements were made. "Any book anywhere," "Every student his book," etc. There was unbounded enthusiasm, and it was felt that if the public library millennium had not arrived it was well on its way. Of course the blessed word was co-operation.

I often wonder if any other word in the English language has been so woefully misunderstood and grossly abused as this word co-operation. Hearing so many different interpretations put on it by people, I became a little doubtful of its meaning myself. I looked it up, and this is what I found it means.

"The combination of a number of persons of a community for purposes of economical production and distribution."

That is to say, that each party participating in the scheme puts in an equal share of some kind for which they draw out an equivalent share. If that is what co-operation means, and I cannot find that it means anything else, the word

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certainly cannot logically be applied to the regional schemes. How can you have co-operation between a number of small libraries with incomes of from £250 to £1,000, which have for years starved their book fund, and a big library with an income of £20,000 to £30,000, which has during many years built up a representative stock of books and which spends more on new books in one year than the smaller libraries' total income in ten? What is happening of course is that one is always giving and the other is always receiving. And that is called co-operation.

As Mr. Fry, in his presidential address to the A.A.L. in 1932, truly observed: "Those who at present shout loudest for regional co-operation are generally those who have nothing to give or those who have stinted their library service in the past."

At the start of the schemes clear and definite rules should have been laid down and strictly adhered to. All new books, reference books, current blue books and current periodicals, together with all textbooks used at local universities and technical colleges, should have been ruled out. What is happening is that *everybody wants the same books at the same time*, and they are all newly published books and the latest editions of textbooks. In regard to new books the report of the Northern Regional Schemes in the *L.A.R.* for June 1932, p. 178, stated that "of the total demand for books, probably 80 per cent. is for modern books, it has been placed as high as 90 per cent.," and they are all applied for at headquarters, namely, the large public library that is running the scheme.

This means of course that the already heavily rated town trying to cope with a large and growing population of its own readers, and in these times often with a curtailed book fund, finds itself saddled with an extra population of readers who want the same books as its own ratepayers. Let the unbiased librarian go any morning to one of these regional headquarters and look at the list of books applied for by the smaller libraries and the county libraries. I guarantee he would have a shock. The local ratepayer would also have a shock if he saw it. I have seen three applications for Ellen Terry's *Letters to Bernard Shaw* on the day of publication, six applications for Wells's *Work, wealth and happiness of mankind* before it was published; I could go on *ad infinitum*. If you prepare a list of recent additions to your library, it is quite certain that they will *all* be applied for in a few days, though you are at your wits' end to satisfy your own readers, and have long waiting lists. I have seen a strong letter of complaint from one small library because *Reading, writing and remembering*, by E. V. Lucas, was not sent to it within a fortnight. In this case there were 22 local ratepayers waiting for the two copies in circulation. The two gems I treasure are the county library, which was very querulous because *My life and loves*, by Frank Harris (described by them as an important textbook of English literature), was not sent them promptly, and the other county library which required urgently *two* copies of the *Seven pillars of wisdom*, by D. H. Lawrence, "as there is a big demand for it in these parts."

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Most serious of all is the constant stream of applications for purely reference books, such as year-books, calendars, examination papers, the latest Government blue books, and all the large and expensive textbooks, to say nothing of valuable art works and even directories. The irony of the situation is that the heavily rated local reader cannot, except under very special circumstances, borrow reference library books, but the outside non-ratepayer can and does. I know of a case where an important reference library book was lent to a smaller library barely 20 miles away. A local ratepayer wished to see this book, and was extremely chagrined to find that it was not on the premises. Since he had to see it that day, he was forced to go in his car to the other library. He did so, and when he got there found the place closed.

The smaller librarians have no sense of reference-library books or reference-library work. In fact, I have heard it frequently advanced by them that reference libraries should be abolished, and all the books made available for loan. From their standpoint, of course, quite an excellent proposition. I remember one librarian being most indignant because he could not be lent from a reference library a two-volume encyclopædia on sanitary engineering for an indefinite period. This work was in daily use in the reference library by students from all around studying for the examinations of the Institution of Sanitary Engineers.

To satisfy adequately the co-operative wants of libraries in a regional scheme, the Headquarters Library would want at least six copies of Stephens's *Commentaries on the laws of England*, and numerous copies of Pollock on *Torts*, Anson's *Law of contract*, and the various expensive textbooks for the Inter and Final of the Law Society's examinations, to say nothing of numerous copies of Gray's, Quain's, and Cunningham's *Anatomy*, and the other textbooks for the medical examinations. I have mentioned these two particular instances, but they could be multiplied a dozen times. In fact, a reference library would be denuded of all its valuable textbooks, which are reference books in themselves, and the local ratepayer and student could console himself with the dubious satisfaction that he was being regionally minded.

It was very pleasing to see Mr. Nowell saying, as was reported in the *L.A.R.* for April 1933, p. 117, that "the city reference libraries were bound to be preserved intact. It would be asking for trouble if a man travelled 20 or 30 miles to Manchester to see a particular book and found on arrival that the book was out."

And unless I have sadly misjudged Mr. Nowell, I cannot see him allowing the magnificent reference library that is in course of erection at Manchester being used to subsidize regionally minded outside libraries with no reference stock except what they can regionally borrow.

No doubt my amazed reader is wondering by this time, "What is the librarian of the larger library thinking of that he allows this thing to go on?" The trouble

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is, that co-operation looks very well to him in theory. Backed by the Carnegie Trust with a grant for the *initial expenses of compiling the regional catalogue*, he takes on the task of running the scheme amid loud applause, not knowing the troubles that await him. When the snags do crop up, and he tries to put things right, his so-called co-operators have already tasted blood, and they are "not having any."

I remember one meeting being called to discuss the abuses creeping in, and a mild complaint from the Headquarters Library was retorted to by a representative of a smaller library as follows: "You are getting a grant to run this scheme, we pay our subscription (average £3 3s.), and we were told we could get what we want (any book, anywhere, etc.). We want our share, and if we do not get it we shall withdraw." And that was that. And nothing further was said.

Another serious side to these schemes, and it is clearly getting worse, is the financial cost to the Headquarters Library in staff salaries which are paid by the local ratepayer. Applications pour in daily. I have seen as many as ten applications coming from one library alone. The majority of the entries contain the most meagre bibliographical details, and many of them are wrong in author or title. A growing habit is that of sending in a request for the latest book, figures, etc., on a subject. The following is an example.

"A book or books giving the amount of oil produced from coal in this country during the last ten years, with details of the machinery and formulae."

It will readily be understood that research of this nature takes both time and patience.

It is fondly believed that the regional schemes are self-supporting. Actually they are nothing of the kind. The annual subscriptions from outside libraries are usually from £1 to £5. Rarely do they exceed £5. Now, if there are twenty libraries in a scheme, and they each contribute £5 per annum (which is very doubtful), the income is only £100, and this is but a tithe of what must be spent on extra books and salaries. Even doubling this figure, that is, allowing an income of £200, the Headquarters Library still loses financially. I know of one library whose net income from the regional scheme is £56, and which is spending nearly £500 on salaries alone in running the scheme. Of course prestige and most laudatory Press notices may be called income, but they are unfortunately rather difficult to assess on a balance sheet.

It is sometimes put forward in defence of the schemes that all these troubles will right themselves in time and the smaller libraries will increase their book funds as they see how their readers appreciate the books. Exactly the reverse is happening. The demand for new books and the latest editions of textbooks is steadily growing. I know of one county library which has cut down its book fund, the reason being that if it pays £5 to the local regional scheme and £5 to the National Central Library it expects £100 worth of book service in return. And in these days of ram-

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pant economy one cannot blame that authority for its action. Another county librarian states quite candidly in his report "that the regional scheme has been a considerable saving to his book fund." And I well believe it.

Some time ago a librarian informed me that her library had not bought any new books since the scheme started. I believed her too. At a recent meeting called to discuss the matter of new books, the smaller librarians were quite candid.

They said, "If you cut out new books and the latest textbooks and confine the scheme to out-of-print and scarce books it is of no use to us. We only get a query of that type very rarely. Our great need is new books and the latest textbooks, as many as we can get." It seems evident that these people think that public libraries have been nationalized, and that there is an unlimited central book fund on which they can draw.

Paradoxical though it may sound, I am not opposed to regional schemes provided they are run on proper lines. But in view of the facts stated, can anyone say they are? Abuses such as I have described are going to kill an idea that is in essence a very fine thing. It will also destroy that real spirit of true co-operation that is the hope of every true librarian.

In spite of all the vaunted statements to the contrary, these regional schemes are working all wrong; they are being systematically and deliberately abused. Unless they are put upon a proper footing, the public library movement is going to be seriously disorganized and the book trade seriously affected. And it is high time someone told the blunt truth about the matter.

BIRMINGHAM, 1933

By M^LLE. COLETTE ADAM

BIRMINGHAM: noisy manufactories, smoking chimneys, dusty houses, black and grey. Dullness.

No, Birmingham is not only that. Birmingham, for me, is not at all that. Don't shrug doubtfully, don't accuse my fancy, but it appeared to me quite a pleasant spot. For I happened to spend a fortnight there this year at Chancellor's Hall. There were lectures there on Librarianship. People may now find it even more difficult to believe that I enjoyed myself. Perhaps that is true. But there is a gift that Chancellor's Hall has for everyone, and this is a smile. And with a smile, you know, everything is easy.

Tell me, I pray you, if it is possible to help smiling when your opened window offers you a grass as smooth as you can dream of with light spots from flowers and

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the most harmonious masses of surrounding trees with their various greens. I hear you saying the frame is not everything. Of course it is not. That is why you have a sweet little book containing a syllabus as marvellous as you can wish. Do not be afraid of its italic warning, "Strict observance of all times given in the programme is essential." For your first breakfast will surely show you that quite "an authority" was too deeply asleep to hear the sound of an awaking bell.

Let us refer again to this white programme book; a most important thing. A mere thing? No, for it had separate life, it was a very personality itself. It told you every morning what would be learned and enjoyed all the day. It told you the names of the lecturers—and they were of the best, I assure you; the names of the places to be visited—and they were of the most famous too. Its word was taken as law when discussion arose. It called you for your meal, and very nearly put you to bed. It was lively because it provided for your daily life, but it knew how to be tactful and never bound you. You could see it lying between two sheets of a notebook, peeping out of a pocket, passing from one hand to another. It was silent but it said everything. In short, it was a helpful friend.

Now that all is over, it is no longer so white, its pages are dog-eared, but it is still full of life.

I remember what mysteries were included in those two simple words: "Social evening." Social evening: a big room with comfortable armchairs scattered here and there; people moving about; lecturers, great authorities, students; gay colours of girls' dresses, dark outlines of standing men; sparkling stars in every eye, glittering smile on every lip; laughs, songs, shouts, dances, and plays. All the childishness of English nature bursting out. An impression of youth which lasted even in the most serious lectures by a joking word thrown out at the proper time, and like an echo drawing an answering laugh.

The lectures were first rate, with an organization which showed an all-embracing conception of modern librarianship. Theory and practice leant on each other: technical lectures and explanatory visits to appropriate places. General culture was widened by literary courses, exhibits and visits to places of artistic or literary repute. Particularly do I remember a Shakespeare play at the Memorial Theatre (which, if I dare borrow a witty word of a well-known personality, had quite a Parisian appearance, for "it was full of Americans").

The latest innovations in library equipment and lighting were exposed to us in a very witty and lively way. New ideas sprang from discussions of controversial questions such as Government inspection of public libraries, local collections, and library examinations, for they were not only put before us but we were asked to debate them. If I go on to say that all these most interesting lectures were preceded by an inaugural address which contained precious advice from Mr. L. Stanley Jast, Past-President of the Library Association, ex-Chief Librarian,

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Manchester, you will understand certainly what great help young librarians have found in this Summer School.

And during this working time we could enjoy both the sun and the grass, for we were always in the open air, so that the voice of knowledge was blended with notes of nature, represented in this instance by bleating of sheep and quacking of duck !

There is something else to be said, which surpassed for me in interest the latest methods of work demonstrated in the school. This was the reception we met everywhere: in the libraries, cathedrals, and museums, they welcomed us with enthusiasm, they knew how to cheer us up after a tiring visit with a cup of tea and some cakes, and all of us, I assure you, appreciated this consideration.

Here it is now, that old programme book, sleeping in the corner of a drawer, but keeping in my Parisian home, the souvenir of useful work and light gaiety. For the words I have written are only a small part of the impression the Summer School at Birmingham made on a girl student and a foreigner.



WHAT THE COUNTIES ARE DOING

By B. OLIPH SMITH

Library Magazines

AMONG the many problems for which County Librarianship is still seeking solutions, one of the most prominent is that of making the public in the areas served aware of the facilities which the library has to offer them; a difficulty which is of course not peculiar to county libraries, and for which no remedy yet appears to have won universal acceptance. In a county the problem is naturally considerably intensified, and it must probably always be a more serious one than is the case in municipal libraries.

Its existence is due to no one circumstance, but to several, of which two are chiefly outstanding. Primarily must be placed the comparative absence of library buildings, forcing county libraries to rely very largely on existing accommodation to house their centres, generally, of course, schools and institutes. Both are open to the objection that they are already associated in the public mind with other functions, and any library established in them is apt to be regarded as a school or an institute one, the access of the general public thereto being seldom realized. The second difficulty lies in the administration of these centres. Annual reports invariably pay high tribute to "all those volunteers who have given so generously of their time and energy, and but for whose efforts the library could not have been carried on!" It is certainly rather striking that there should seldom be

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found any lack of volunteers, in either town or village, willing to perform this service, which means devoting from one to six hours—and even more—a week to a task which holds out no prospect of remuneration. Such is, however, the situation, and we should feel eternally grateful to these folk for making possible the county library service as it is to-day, realizing nevertheless, that they represent its biggest weakness. They have generally neither the time, knowledge, nor ability to impress on their borrowers the facilities which the library has to offer; it is indeed not always easy to be sure that they themselves appreciate all the possibilities of the service which they are administering. And enthusiasm, however brightly it may burn at the outset, is apt to wane after years of thankless endeavour. My own opinion is that although volunteers can be relied upon to carry out the routine work of the centres, it is usually vain to expect them to indulge in any "boosting" of the library.

These, then, are the two conditions which chiefly mitigate against the fullest possible results being obtained. The first will usually cure itself with the aid of Father Time; every borrower will be an advertisement of the fact that the library is open to all. Judicious use of the local Press is valuable, and is usually not difficult to arrange, while every school child may be used as a medium of publicity. The second trouble is more serious; the indifferent local librarian can nullify the most strenuous efforts of the county librarian and his staff to provide an efficient Students' Postal Service, to provide catalogues which shall reveal the full resources of the stock, or even to obtain the full benefit from the books actually at the centre. I am confident that in the average county not more than 10 per cent. of the borrowers realize that they can obtain books other than those actually on the shelves; catalogues are frequently put away out of sight, so that their existence may never even be suspected by those using that centre, while occasionally even a local librarian will be found who limits his borrowers to one book each to save himself trouble, with, needless to say, disastrous results on the non-fiction issues.

Having diagnosed the trouble and its causes, what is the remedy?

The one solution which overcomes all these troubles by eradicating their causes is unfortunately seldom practicable—the provision of branch libraries in special buildings and with trained staffs. Even when all other difficulties have been overcome, the question of expense is still prohibitive in rural areas, although in urban districts the situation is happier, and much is already being done. The next few years will see huge strides in this direction, but even then the greater part of the country will still have to rely primarily on the village centre, although regional libraries in all market towns will be of great value. What is required is some means of making the utmost use of the centres, by going direct to the public and telling them what are the facilities to which they are entitled, and how to set

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about getting them; furthermore, this is necessary not only among those who do not use the library, but also, and probably to a greater extent, among those who are already enrolled. The Press, school children, local societies and institutes, church magazines, flower shows, and other exhibitions are all useful agents for propaganda, but these all depend on circumstances, and call for a certain amount of purely local interest and effort, not an easy thing to achieve with a small staff. But there is one method which is open to none of these objections, and this is the library magazine.

It is with this last that I propose dealing, for I feel that it has considerable possibilities. By its aid most of the weaknesses of the voluntary system can be overcome, and it can also be of considerable use in combating the general ignorance of the library's existence and purpose. To be successful in either direction is not however easy, nor indeed possible without very considerable care; a mere library list or a copy of the average library magazine is useless—as I fear are many of these latter.

The requirements of the ideal county library magazine are easily stated, if less easily achieved. It must be attractive enough to be read and talked about by as many borrowers and non-borrowers as can get hold of it; it must tell them what the library has to offer, and persuade them to take full advantage of it, at the same time showing them how; it must make clear the scope of the Students' Postal Service, and the extent to which the library is willing to co-operate with local societies. To make matters more difficult it must chiefly appeal to the type of person who requires urging, encouragement, and enlightenment to use the library; in other words, it must be reasonably low-brow, since the local intelligentsia may be more safely relied upon to discover and use the local centre.

Even should it succeed in all these desiderata, its task is by no means finished; it must also appeal to the local librarians and helpers, to try to create in them an enthusiasm for and a pride in their work, since only then will they give of their best. It must also help them to realize that they are part of a county-wide organization, thus helping to reduce unreasonable demands for preferential treatment. And lastly, having fulfilled all these diverse functions, it must still appeal to people of taste and education, and must be an advertisement worthy of the service which has produced it.

It might be thought that these many requirements were sufficient to daunt the stoutest heart, but there is yet another obstacle, and one of such magnitude as normally to prevent any attempt being made to cope with the rest—the usual one of expense. There are four possible methods by which the cost may be met: out of income, by making a charge for each copy, by making advertisements pay for it, or by combinations of any of these three. Taking them in their order, we find objections to each. In the first case few committees would consent to a

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magazine being a charge on income—a book-list or a catalogue, yes, but a magazine ! . . . Secondly, to expect the public to buy it is to defeat its object, since this means a severe restriction of circulation, and must leave almost untouched the class which it is chiefly necessary to reach. Lastly, the obtaining of advertisements in a periodical covering an area such as the average county is no light task, since advertisers expect to see some return for their expenditure other than the satisfaction of helping the cause of literature ; the type of advertisement which is obtainable is usually not that which is desirable in a magazine of the character aimed at. Indeed, until the time comes when libraries allocate a certain portion of their incomes to publicity the position is by no means a rosy one, and it will probably be necessary for librarians to disguise their efforts as book-lists for the confounding of committees.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that county library magazines do not flourish ; indeed, to the best of my belief there is only one at present in production, *The Library list* of Northamptonshire. I hope I am wrong on this point, and if there are any other counties with magazines in production, I tender them my apologies and should be grateful for copies. *The Library list* is quite a delightful little production, and is on the right lines, though falling short of the requirements I have enumerated. It does not, I am glad to say, live up to the promise of its title, since only five pages out of twenty-two are devoted to lists, but this camouflage is probably necessary. The September number contains an article on local history, one of a series of "Letters from a local librarian," sections "For the countryman" and "For the countrywoman," "Queries and recommendations"—quite well done—and details of the forthcoming programme of exchanges, etc. As one who has had some experience in the production of a county library magazine, I feel that the tone is perhaps a little too high-brow ; "Letters from a village librarian," for example, is addressed to those interested in county library work, rather than to the borrowers, which is, I feel, a mistake ; the latter can hardly be altogether expected to appreciate a post mortem of their reading tastes. The cost is met partly by making a charge and partly by advertisements ; these latter, it is interesting to note, are all from library book-sellers and book-binders, who can hardly expect any direct return from the readers of the magazine. . . . The format is very pleasing, although one could wish for a rather more worthy cover.

Books for all, the Middlesex magazine, to which I have already referred, was to have been entirely paid for by advertisements, but it proved impossible to obtain sufficient, and after the first year it was necessary to discontinue publication, although not, it is anticipated, permanently. If this was the situation in a densely populated area like Middlesex, the position can be imagined in the sparsely populated counties. Incidentally, it was to be noticed that the articles which

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attracted any attention from public or local librarians were invariably of a comparatively low-brow character.

In both these examples two months has been chosen as the period between editions, and it is hard to find the time or money to publish more frequently; my own opinion though is that any library magazine published in a county area should be at least a monthly one to secure the maximum results.



OUR LIBRARY

HARROD (L. MONTAGUE): *Lending library methods.* Grafton and Co., 1933. 12s. 6d.

HERE we have the application of the principles of "natural history" bibliography to lending library routine. The profession sadly needs a new set of textbooks, but this is a model to avoid. The work has been compiled from the wrong end. It is based on a laborious collection of infinitesimal detail and assembly of the items without adequate comment. The ideals of the service and the changes introduced by the general adoption of open-access find no place. Open-access implies display, and the principle should influence outlook on routine. The cultural aspect of lending library work, modern propaganda methods, bulletins, book lists, etc., are ignored. The work has been well and carefully written, but the attitude to the subject is unfortunate. Veneration of forms and the compilation of redundant and useless records has long been the bugbear of lending library work, and the time has arrived when a stand should be taken against needless routine. This book does not help in this direction. "Registration methods" is a poor chapter. Borrowers' numbers had a place in "indicator" days but serve no purpose in card charging. The number and numerical index are superfluous. A street index is ridiculous. The only borrower's ticket and book card illustrated are not those of the best type. The design of the possession label shown is wretched. There is contradiction in the first paragraph of the Furniture chapter, and linoleum-covered table tops are hideous. Card catalogues are not more economical than sheaf. Very debatable matters, such as "privilege issues" and the conversion of shelf guides to subject guides, are glibly passed over. Mr. Sayers in his Introduction implies that the book should be approached in a critical spirit. This hint is commended to the wise; the small minded can have a glorious revel in the laborious statements of trifles and much that is obvious. *Parvum in multo.*

L.C.

The Library Assistant

THE DIVISIONS

MIDLAND DIVISION

A JOINT meeting of the North Midland and Birmingham and District Branches of the Library Association and the Midland Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians was held at Rugby on Thursday, 13th July, some sixty persons being present. An extremely interesting visit was paid to the Rugby Radio Station of the Post Office, by kind invitation of the Engineer-in-charge, Mr. G. A. Struthers, A.M.I.E.E., M.I.R.E. Subsequently, at the Public Library, an official welcome to Rugby was extended to the party by His Worship the Mayor (Alderman J. J. McKinnell), through whose kind hospitality tea was provided.

An inspection of the recently executed and very successful extension and alteration of the library followed. The new arrangements are a great improvement, and were much admired, especially because they have been effected in the face of the seriously limiting factors of a difficult lay-out and restricted funds. Particular note was taken of the furniture and fittings, in the construction of which unusual and inexpensive materials have been utilized very effectively.

The evening meeting was held under the chairmanship of Miss Kate E. Pierce, F.L.A., Librarian of Kettering. After formal business, Miss E. A. Gavin (Coventry Public Libraries) read a paper on "Pageants and plays of old Coventry," which was very interestingly written, and was received with acclamation.

Mr. F. G. B. Hutchings, F.L.A., Librarian and Curator of the Public Library and Museum, then gave an account of "The Rugby library extension," under the two heads of the structure and the books. Fixed shelves have been adopted in the Junior Library on grounds of rigidity and economy, and because, in a lending library, shelves are seldom adjusted. A sloping shelf on the "in" counter is found advantageous to the staff. Wicket gates have no self-locking latches. Table tops of grey fibre have been used to cut down light reflection. In the selection of stock for the Junior Library, *Books to read* and the Bethnal Green and Dagenham catalogues proved very useful. Somewhat revolutionary curtailments of accepted practice in the "processing" of the stock were introduced. The single stamp used is placed at the end of the letterpress and bears class and accession numbers only. No accession or stock book is kept. A stock card forms the basis of the Committee book-list, becomes the record of books on order, and ultimately goes to build up the shelf register. The only record of borrowers consists of their application forms in one alphabetical sequence. Collation of books was regarded as unnecessary.

After a keen discussion of Mr. Hutchings's views on economical administration, an address was given by Mr. A. T. James, Deputy Librarian, Northamp-

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ton, entitled "Assistants versus librarians." This was not the controversial discourse which the title appeared to indicate, but was in the main a plea for sympathetic understanding and whole-hearted co-operation between the "executive" and the "personnel."

The proceedings closed with warm votes of thanks to all who had contributed in various ways to the carrying out of an undeniably interesting programme.

NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

The Summer Meeting of the above Branch was held on Friday, 28th July, when, by kind permission of Sir Thomas White, J.P., C.C., members were afforded an opportunity of viewing the Mersey Tunnel which is rapidly nearing completion.

Thirty-five members and friends proceeded by motor-coach from Reference Library, Liverpool, through the tunnel to Birkenhead, a member of the Engineering staff acting as guide.

From here the party embarked on a two-hour tour of Wirral and Cheshire, returning via Birkenhead and the Mersey Tunnel to Liverpool.

SOUTH-EASTERN DIVISION

A joint meeting of the South-eastern and South-western Divisions of the Association of Assistant Librarians was held at Portsmouth on 28th June, the occasion marking the inauguration, twenty-one years ago, of the South Coast Branch of the Association of Assistant Librarians, from which have since developed the two present Divisions.

The presence of the President of the Association of Assistant Librarians, the Hon. Secretary, and the Hon. Treasurer was very greatly appreciated by the members.

The local arrangements were in the hands of Mr. H. Sargent, Hon. Secretary of the South-western Division, whose attractive programme commenced with a motor tour during the afternoon of places of interest in Portsmouth and its neighbourhood; members being the guests of the Portsmouth Corporation. After tea at the Clarence Pier Café, to which the South-western members very kindly entertained their visiting confrères, an evening meeting was held at the Carnegie Branch Library, Fratton, presided over by the President of the Association of Assistant Librarians, Miss E. Exley, who expressed the pleasure that it gave her to attend upon such an unusually interesting occasion.

Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith also conveyed the congratulations of the Council to the "South Coast twins" upon the attaining of their majority, and wished them a

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further successful period of activity and achievement during the next twenty-one years.

The occasion also being that of the annual business meeting of the South-eastern Division, the necessary formal business was dispatched as briefly as possible, the Eastern members electing as their President for the ensuing year Mr. William Law, Deputy Director of the Brighton Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. Mr. E. Male was re-elected as Hon. Treasurer, and Miss G. L. Dean as Hon. Secretary; the Committee Members elected being the Misses Carnell, Clarke, Gerard, Talmey, Young, and Messrs. Rowsell and Hamblyn.

A paper was then read by Miss Ethel Gerard on the library development of the South Coast during the last twenty-one years. In a brief survey Miss Gerard outlined the general development of the library movement in the South, which has been one of continual expansion and growth evidenced particularly in the development of three very efficient county services, better provision for juvenile readers, the establishment of a considerable number of new branch libraries, in fact, an encouraging increase of library interest and activity throughout the whole of the area.

Very hearty votes of thanks were accorded to the Portsmouth Corporation, to the Library Authorities, and to the members of the South-western Division for their hospitality.

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION

Favoured by brilliant sunshine, a very successful ramble amid the glories of the New Forest was held by the South-western Division on Sunday, 30th July.

All assistants working in the Divisional area were invited to attend, irrespective of their membership of the Association.

Fourteen stalwarts representing Bournemouth, Eastleigh, Southampton, and Portsmouth gathered together at 2.15 p.m. in Brockenhurst.

Four miles' pleasant walking through delightful forest scenery brought the party to Boldre Church, where a brief halt was made while its many interesting features were examined.

The return journey to Brockenhurst was made by a varied but equally beautiful track, and the short rest beneath the cool shade of some spreading beech trees was greatly appreciated.

SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DIVISION

The October meeting of the Division will be held at Cardiff on Wednesday, 18th October. Full details will be circulated to members in due course, but it is expected that the programme will include a visit to Cardiff Castle and an address by Mr. John Warner, Chief Librarian, Newport, on "Book bindings," with a small exhibition of bindings. Will members other than those on the Cardiff staff please notify the Hon. Secretary before 10th October

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if they intend being present, so that arrangements may be made for catering.

The Division has recently commenced a Divisional library of professional textbooks. The scheme first took shape as a result of an oral class in classification conducted during the first months of this year. The money paid in fees was entirely devoted to the purchase of textbooks which will form the nucleus of a small working collection designed in the first instance to assist members of the Division whose local resources are inadequate, and secondarily to supplement the resources of the larger libraries in the Divisional area. Various schemes (such as the sale of group photographs among the staff) are being utilized to assist the funds, and donations of textbooks are invited.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

PUBLIC LIBRARY,
CHESTERFIELD,

11th September, 1933.

DEAR SIR,

I am indebted to Mr. Callander for the review of the Chesterfield Annual Report. Like him, I am reluctant to enter into controversy, but although in the main his comments are fair, I think it only just to stress a few of the items in the report that he omits.

First, "An analysis of the books out in circulation showed that 40 per cent. were *non-fiction* compared with 29.75 per cent. the previous year." This is, I suggest, an increase which causes me no uneasiness—rather the reverse.

Second, nearly 4,000 new readers borrowed books from the Lending Library, and I should think it true that the majority of new readers commence with "tripe," particularly in an industrial town with a fifth of its population totally or partially unemployed. By the way, is not tripe a very edible dish?

Finally, I would point out that by no means may all the books in the classes "Adventure and mystery" and "Romances" be classed as "tripe."

Yours faithfully,

L. C. JACKSON, *Librarian.*

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